18 June 1981 – First heard at Hingolgadh.
5 June 1982 – Full moonlight. Heard calling at 2300 hrs
7 June 1982 – Heard calling at 2300 hrs.
8 June 1982 – Moonlight clear night. Heard calling
– and flying overhead west to east
– monsoon over Kerala and Madras.
9 June 1983 – Heard calling and flying high overhead at 0020 hrs.
2 June 1984 – Heard calling early in the morning at 0315 hrs
Monsoon current over Kerala since 31 May 1984. Weak current.
3 June 1984 – Heard calling and flying high overhead at 2330 hrs.
4 June 1986 – Heard calling and flying high overhead early in the morning at 0330 hrs
4 June 1987 – Calling and flying high overhead at 2310 hrs. Monsoon over Kerala and Goa.

Every time I have heard the call, the cuckoo was flying from west to east. This is the normal direction for it to migrate from Africa into the Indian subcontinent. I have never heard it calling and flying in any other direction in all these years.

Since some years the numbers of Pied Crested Cuckoos in the Jasdan area have decreased. The scrub forest at Hingolgadh is getting sparse. Grazing by cattle and goats and cutting of grass as well as trees and bushes for fuel have disturbed the bird life of the area. The Yellow Eyed Babbler, a former breeding resident, has not been seen for the last few years and the White Bellied Minivet is also on the way out. The *Acacia* groves have thinned out and with the loss of grass and bush cover the numbers of Common Babblers — the main hosts of the parasitic Pied Crested Cuckoo — have declined. Perhapse, the numbers of the Pied Crested Cuckoo have gone down in the Jasdan area due to these several factors.

June 16, 1987. SHIVRAJKUMAR KHACHAR

22. FEEDING BEHAVIOUR OF WHITEBREASTED KINGFISHER *HALCYON SMYRNENSIS* (LINNAEUS)

At 1115 hrs on 1 January 1987, I saw a Whitebreasted Kingfisher on the parapet of a nullah near my house in Udaipur, Rajasthan. The bird had a frog in its beak. It started beating the frog on the parapet, then flew to a tree in the compound of our house and started beating the frog on a branch. I tried to photograph it, but it was disturbed and flew further up into dense foliage.

It beat the frog on the branch for half an hour. At 1145 hrs it started swallowing the frog. It took 10 minutes to swallow it and in the meanwhile it excreted four times. While swallowing, it was breathing heavily and this state remained for 15 minutes. When the legs of the frog disappeared into its gullet it remained in a stiff position. Meanwhile some bird of prey flew overhead and many birds either ducked or flew away, but the kingfisher remained still.

To see the reaction of the bird I beat the trunk of the tree and made noises, but it did not move. The bird remained in this state for four minutes. Then it started moving its head, and gradually its breathing became less heavy. After 20 minutes of the swallowing of the frog the kingfisher flew away.

January 20, 1987 RAZA TEHSIN

23. BLACK DRONGO *DICRURUS ADSIMILIS* NESTING ON ELECTRIC POLE

The Southern Black Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis* (Bechstein) is known to nest generally on trees (Ali & Ripley 1972, Shukkur & Joseph 1980). However, we found a pair nesting on an electric pole in the Circuit house compound, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, even though there were a number of large sized suitable trees nearby.

The nest was located in a small space between the horizontal and vertical sections of the cemented pole, just below the lower power line. It was first observed on 21 July 1987 with an adult bird brooding in the nest. On 24th July we noted two fledglings. We photographed the nest and a fledgling on 29th July. They remained in the nest till about 29th August. On 27th and 28th August, we noted only one parent feeding the young till as late as 1905 hrs (sunset that day was at 1827 hrs) by bringing flying insects attracted to the nearby light.

We cannot understand whether this rather unusual nest site provides any special advantage to the bird, especially when there are suitable trees nearby. Could it be that the bird selected the location to take advantage of abundant insects that were being attracted to the lights, so that it could feed its young with relatively less effort?

K.S.R. KRISHNA RAJU
December 17, 1987. U.V. BAIRAGI RAJU

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24. COMMON MYNA AS A CAMPFOLLOWER OF LESSER WHISTLING TEALS

The Common Myna is known to follow domestic cattle, horses and wild herbivora when they graze. The grazing animals disturb insects which become easily accessible to the mynas.

One afternoon I saw a flock of 9 Lesser Whistling Teals land on the banks of the Mula—Mutha bird sanctuary and waddle into the grassy bank looking for food. A few minutes later they were joined by a few Common Mynas. Soon about 20 of them aggregated around the teals and followed them persistently down thebank for about 50 m. The next day the teals arrived at the same time, and were immediately spotted by the mynas, who seemed to appear from nowhere began following them much more closely. In fact they seemed to pick up insects from just around the feet of the teals. I saw the same pattern repeated again three times during the next couple of days.

This shows how rapidly such a bond between different species can be formed when food availability is a motivating factor.

June 6, 1987. E.K. BHARUCHA

25. TOOL– USING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIAN HOUSE CROW *CORVUS SPLENDENS*

Tool–using behaviour in birds and other animals has been described by many authors. The Woodpecker–finch *Cactospiza pallida* and the Mangrove–finch *c. heliobates* of the Galapagos islands use Cactus spines, leaf petioles, twigs, etc., for probing into holes and crevices during their food search. Recently Orenstein (1972) recorded tool–use in the New Caledonian Crow, *Corvus moneduloides.*

On 8 January 1987, we had an opportunity to observe activity related to tool–use in the Indian House Crow *Corvus splendens*. At 1248 hrs we saw a House Crow on a *Manilkara hexandra* tree, just 2 m below the canopy (the total tree height is *c.* 7 m) busily engaged in an intricate behaviour. We were sitting about 10 m away from the tree. The crow perched on a small branch, plucked a leaf and immediately thrust it into a hole in one of the big branches just opposite its perch. After thrusting in the leaf it waited for about a minute, removed the leaf the hole and, holding it under its feet, pecked at some prey from the leaf and ate. It then dropped the leaf, plucked another leaf, thrust it into the hole and repeated the operation. The bird repeated this process dexterously till 1302 hrs. We recorded it performing this activity five times. Twice it dropped the leaf without picking up anything; apparently there was no prey attached to the leaf. During these observations we also noticed the crow thrusting its beak alone deep into the hole twice but without success.

When the crow left the perch, one of us immediately climbed the tree and investigated the hole to determine the food that the crow had obtained. We found a colony of ants,*Sima* sp. deep inside the hole. The depth of the hole was 12 cm. We collected nine *Manilkara hexandra* leaves from under that branch on the ground where the crow had sat. We had observed the crow using the leaf as a tool five times but the number of dropped leaves collected on the ground indicates that the process was on well before we located the crow. This repeated use of leaves by the crow to obtain prey is of a clear—cut evidence of tool—use by the crow *Corvus splendens.*

S. ALAGAR RAJAN
June 17, 1987. P. BALASUBRAMANIAN

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